

The World's Work

WALTER H. PAGE, EDITOR

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TERMS: \$3.00 a year; single copies, 25 cents. Published monthly. Copyright, 1907, by Doubleday, Page & Company
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Country Life in America

Farming

The Garden Magazine

CHICAGO
1515 Heyworth Building

DOUBLEDAY, PAGE & COMPANY,

NEW YORK
133 East Sixteenth Street



THE POWER THAT IS TRANSFORMING SOUTHERN INDUSTRY

The streams from the Appalachian region, it has been conservatively estimated, have more than 3,000,000 continuous horse-power—the cheapest and, by long distance transmission lines, most accessible source of light and power, giving this whole region an important advantage over any similar area of the Union. This photograph shows the fall which supplies light to Montgomery, Ala.

THE GROWTH OF THE LIBRARIES

THE CIRCULATION OF BOOKS IN SOUTHERN CITIES, TOWNS, AND SCHOOLS

BY

LOUIS R. WILSON

TEN years ago, in a magazine descriptive of the general growth of the Southern States, a statement of the development of the library as an institution which largely affected the life of the South would scarcely have found a place. Then there was no clearly defined, well-organized library movement. The free public library, the finest product of all library development, was scarcely known.

But the modern library—rural, public, college, and traveling—has, since 1896, firmly established itself as an institution making for saner life and broader culture.

Possibly the most notable step taken has been the establishment of the rural school library. In North Carolina, when the educational qualification for suffrage was enacted, something very definite in the way of greater educational facilities for all the people had to be provided. The legislature of 1901 equipped, with the aid of funds raised by the school districts and counties, at least six rural school libraries in each of the ninety-seven counties. By means of further appropriations in 1903 and 1905, the number of libraries in each county was increased from six to eighteen, and on June 30th, 1906, 1,400 of these libraries, containing a total of 125,000 volumes, were in operation in the state.

In Virginia, the same idea has been carried out by a system of traveling school libraries, which has been operative since October, 1906, and 2,625 volumes have been put in immediate circulation. Libraries containing fifty volumes each are made up from it and sent out daily to the rural school stations throughout the state. Every station is allowed to keep its collection for four or six months, and then to send it back to the state library to receive a new collection.

At the close of December, 1906, twenty thoroughly equipped Carnegie libraries, representing \$537,000 in buildings, were in operation in Texas. Since 1897, Durham, Raleigh,

Greensboro, Asheville, Charlotte, and other North Carolina towns, a score or more in all, have established public libraries, and during the year 1906 the five towns just named recorded loans totaling 200,000 volumes among 25,000 borrowers. In 1905-6, Virginia and Arkansas each established its first three public libraries. Within the past six months, Atlanta has received \$30,000 for two additional branch libraries, Louisville \$200,000 for eight similar branch stations, and the New Orleans library is just finishing its \$200,000 quarters.

The most significant fact growing out of the activities of these public libraries, however, is not that they have been placed on a sound financial basis and are recording a splendid total of loans, but rather that they have tended to reproduce themselves in other communities. In Charlotte, Atlanta, Austin, Louisville, Chattanooga, Nashville—in fact, in all the larger towns—the public library has been a fertile centre from which decidedly active influences have spread. In each of these libraries, a system of apprenticeship and general library instruction has been maintained which has quickened individual growth, and a publicity bureau has been operated which has helped to form and crystallize a fine, general library sentiment.

Southern college libraries have also undergone a complete revolution in spirit, although their growth has not been so apparent as that of the school and public libraries. While they have not served the public directly, they have served it none the less effectively by impressing the student with the true importance of the library as an institution. Quietly, but at the same time enthusiastically, they have worked their way up to a place of dignity and power in college life. Ten years ago, the library was useful to the student of literature primarily, and not to the college as a whole; but, since it has come to be more and more a perfectly equipped laboratory, and since the

librarian is no longer a mere curator of books but a well-trained, professional man, the library has been recognized as an active force in college life.

Their growth, however, has not been entirely intensive. Since 1895, the University of Virginia has erected a \$60,000 library building and has added 50,000 volumes to the 12,000 saved from the disastrous fire which destroyed its former library. In North Carolina, Trinity College has received a splendid \$50,000 building since 1899 and has increased its book collection from 11,000 to 37,000 volumes. In September of the present year, the University of North Carolina will house its present collection of 45,000 volumes in a new, fire-proof structure and will enjoy, in addition to its present library revenues, the income from a new \$55,000 endowment fund for books. At the Universities of Georgia and Louisiana, \$50,000 library buildings have been occupied in the last four years and material additions have been made to the original collections. South Carolina, Texas, Tennessee, and Alabama have each added one or more college library buildings since 1905; and since January of the present year, Florida has received a gift of \$40,000 for library purposes at Stetson University.

BOOKS FOR RURAL DISTRICTS

The traveling library, too, has firmly established itself in the South and has met with immediate success. Its general adoption in rural and sparsely settled communities is certain, being conditioned solely upon a proper provision by the states for its care and direction. Georgia inaugurated the movement in 1898. By 1905 twenty-three schools had been added to the traveling list; ninety-seven schools and forty-six rural communities had received circulating collections; 4,174 magazines and periodicals had been sent out; and since 1898, 800 schools have been influenced to make permanent improvements upon their school-houses or grounds; 400 have established libraries of their own; forty-six rural communities have founded village improvement societies, and a total of 5,468 books have been kept in constant circulation. In North Carolina and Texas, the movement has found strong support in the Federation of Women's Clubs. In Virginia the traveling libraries have been placed under direct state control. A fund of \$7,500 was appropriated for their maintenance for two

years. Free transportation was received from the railroads; and thus the small Virginia village, which hitherto has contented itself with its general store, post-office, school, and church, has been brought under the broadening, vitalizing influence of the open book.

The most conclusive proof of library development is the state library association. In seven of the Southern States, such an organization—composed of librarians, trustees, educators, members of social clubs, and others—has been formed. With a membership of 1,000, these associations have given serious consideration to various library problems and have worked toward one common end—the popularization of the library movement and the creation of a public sentiment sufficiently strong to insure every community some form of library facilities. The state library commissions of Maryland, Virginia, Tennessee, and Georgia have grown out of the state associations and have placed all forms of public library activity upon a permanent basis. In North Carolina, Alabama, and Texas, the state associations have not yet succeeded in securing definite legislation, but the need has been clearly shown and the demand, sooner or later, will be met.

In Georgia and Texas, library progress of all kinds has been longer lived and the results are more satisfying. In South Carolina, Mississippi, and Florida, growth has been less evident. But everywhere throughout the South undisputed progress has been made. Three facts in this connection are significant. The first is that the American Library Association held its annual meeting this year in Asheville. A development of sufficient magnitude in the South brought this deliberative body to the Southern field for the discussion of special problems of the Southern libraries.

The second is that, at its last annual meeting, the Southern Educational Association created a permanent department of libraries, thereby insuring the library due consideration in the educational work of the South.

The third, and the most significant, is that there is now in Atlanta a highly developed, well-attended library training school. This marks the passing of the untrained librarian in the South.

In the last ten years, the Southern library has made a long stride forward. It has been making for a broader culture and for a larger view of life. Its success is assured.